



## Staff Issue No. 3

Advisor	Georgina Willms
Chief Editor	Michelle Piwek
Editors	Kay Dockhorn Mika Dick Katja Löhle
PR	Nils Apelmeier Paula Kaiser Katja Löhle
Logo	Michelle Piwek
Cover Design	Katja Löhle Michelle Piwek



[http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/inkdrop\\_](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/inkdrop_)



[inkdrop@uni-bielefeld.de](mailto:inkdrop@uni-bielefeld.de)



[@inkdropjournal](https://www.instagram.com/inkdropjournal)

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# Introduction

by Georgina Willms

Dear Reader,

Here at Bielefeld University we have been living and working in a massive construction site for many years now. The complete overhaul of the university buildings has meant the façade that greets us every day is constantly changing, with each permutation more chaotic than the last. Working and studying amongst the bulldozers and jackhammers, the smoke and dirt, the clanging and the droning, has kept us on our toes and has often been distracting and irritating.

But not boring!

These constant reminders of change, of motion and progress, have become the backdrop to the creativity of the students here at Bielefeld.

The texts you're about to encounter have risen out of the rubble of our university, sparked by the constant modification of our surroundings. The creative writing students represented here have been inspired to examine change both externally and internally, producing texts that ponder beginnings and endings, destruction and creation.

Construction, and (re)construction.

These texts were produced in the English creative writing courses offered at the language centre at Bielefeld University. In these courses, students increase their language fluency by studying, creating, and sharing works of prose and poetry.

This issue is the result of hard work by a dedicated group of students, under the leadership of our editor, Michelle Piwek.

Many thanks to Susanne Hecht, the director of the Fachsprachenzentrum at Bielefeld University, for her support.

Happy reading!

Georgina Willms

English Coordinator and Faculty advisor for Ink Drop



# Liquid Danger

by Kay Dockhorn

A hiss catches her ear and, wordlessly, Kira raises a hand to silence her soldiers.

The hush that falls is almost instant, and the sound suddenly crystal clear.

Peering around the icy outcropping they've just stopped at, Kira sees a group of village teens, clearly fire mages, throwing burning balls at a small something at their feet.

Kira's eyes go wide.

"Is that a..."

"Zulimi Kid." Théo confirms behind her, suddenly much tenser than before.

Zulimi are the most peaceful of the Kaibiri and rarely turn aggressive when Elvians enter their domains.

...But if they catch stupid teens torturing one of their young?

The whole pod will ensure a bloodbath of justice and vengeance.

Yes, POD.

Because Zulimi are the only Kaibiri to live and travel as a family.

Where there is one, there will always be more.

And in the next instant, all chaos comes to life.

The kid yowls. The sea surges. And the teens fall back on their butts when faced with the towering forms of four adult Zulimi!

Eyes of green algae glow in anger, as the protective family members see the tiny, evaporated state of their youngest.

Burbles and swishes of liquid sound burst from the water, and it's clear the Zulimi are discussing the appropriate punishment for such an act.

Being both a part of and able to control any type of liquid, the Zulimi look like massive blue sludge monsters. Their bodies only told apart from water by their opaque consistency. The adults tower over the coastline, swirling with currents of magic and energy.

"Well, so much for an easy shortcut." Kira mutters, causing Théo to smirk beside her.

"What, lost your appeal for adventure already?" he teases.

She rolls her eyes.

"More like getting tired of the needless fighting."

“We could just let them be and live with the repercussions of another flood,” he points out, half-serious, though he knows full well his best friend will never be the kind of person who can ignore someone in danger.

“Go ahead. I’m going to try that new communication skill.”

His eyes go wide.

“You’re WHAT?” Hhe whisper-yells, but she’s already slipping around the ice block and headed for the scene of the altercation.

Sighing, he raises his hand when he hears the clatter of his soldiers’ armour.

“You lot are staying here,” he orders, his tone brooking no arguments, as he heaves out a sigh and makes to follow his fiancée into the danger zone.





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# Beast, Hunter, Prey

by Mika Dick

Once shadows start creeping in, I wake up from the dead  
A vampire laying in my coffin, hungry voices in my head,  
The sun brings light, I stir at night, I am a monster shunned at sight,  
There is no place on earth for me, a bearer of the mark of Caine,  
Where do I go when I'm asleep, where do I flee to from this misery?

Hands so cold, who would ever take them, lips like ice they make them scream,  
I bear no warmth, no spark of life, this body's just an empty shell  
As in the tale of moth and light, beauty leads the path to hell,  
Why can't you see me for what I am, a demon wearing angel wings.

I bring terror, horror, fears and screams,  
no love for me just stakes and tears.  
But damn I love it, want it, need it, look at what's become of me,  
Revel in my own monstrosity, high on blood like ecstasy,  
Who can help me, who can love me,  
who can put an end to me?  
where do I go, where do I go?

Where do I go when I'm asleep, where do I flee to from this misery?  
I'm scared of what I have become, this monster deep inside of me,  
It craves for blood, I'm off to hunt wherever your fate ends we'll meet  
Holding you inside my arms, don't be afraid I got you babe,  
I promise it won't hurt for long.  
For now, at least, we got each other  
Give me all you have inside you, you'll live on as part of me  
We both will never be alone.

I am the end to all your dreams, desire is my middle name.  
As we lock eyes I take you in, your soul wraps itself around mine  
I wish I could say it was love, affection blossoming soft and pure,  
But what I feel is unearthly lust, greed corrupting every thought  
Need it, feed it, want it, stop it, please just once do not come near,  
Once you get close there's no escape  
I'm sorry, we both never had a chance.

Where do I go when I'm asleep, where do I flee to from this misery?  
I'm scared of what I have become, this monster deep inside of me,  
It craves for blood, I'm off to hunt, wherever your fate ends I'll be there  
Holding you inside my arms, don't be afraid I got you babe  
I promise it won't hurt for long.  
For now at least we got each other, you will live on in my soul  
Give me all you have inside you, you'll live on as part of me.

A walking oxymoron, death incarnate, I bring doom and peace to all,  
I don't care 'bout good and evil, the beast knows no morality,  
Guess that's what really makes a monster, the fact that I don't even bother,  
What's mouse to cat, for that's what I am, a hunter toying with its prey  
It's just the way things are and will be, until your skin turns dry and grey.  
Your death breathes new life into my corpse, your blood marks my soul's damnation,  
I'm sorry, we both never had a chance.

Where do I go when I'm asleep, where do I flee to from this misery?  
I'm scared of what I have become, that monster deep inside of me  
It craves for blood, I'm off to hunt wherever your fate ends I'll be there  
Holding you inside my arms, don't be afraid I got you babe,  
I promise it won't hurt for long  
Where do I go, where do I go?  
Where could ever be a place for me?  
Where do I go, where do I go?  
I'm a nightmare come to life  
The trigger of most primal fear  
That voice whispering in your ear  
'Just this time, please run from me'.

Like we could ever outrun the beast.

# **Extinction**

by Maria Christina Lavanco

*CW: death*

In a world that is falling apart,  
where people feel a heavy heart.  
I cannot stop but wonder,  
will the Earth go down in thunder?

The seeds of chaos have been sown.  
There is no mercy from the unknown.  
Believe it or not,  
the Earth is more than hot.

Is there a solution?  
Or are we left here in confusion?

In the face of devastation,  
we stand as the last generation.



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# Cannibalism

by Mika Dick

Mother is dead  
And we all watched it happen  
As they beat her flesh  
With whips and rods and shovels  
Collecting the diamonds and pearls that fell from her eyes  
Putting her pain on display in galleries for us to adore  
Adorning themselves with the tears of her blood

Mother is dead  
And we cheered them on  
As they drilled into her body  
With iron claws, knives sharpened with greed  
Tearing earthen skin apart, teeth uprooting goddess' crown  
Stealing the fruit of her womb, to claim as their own, devour it whole  
Leaving only barren soil for growth

Mother is dead  
And we waited in line  
For our turn to suck her dry  
Squeezing her bosom and biting down  
So more of that black gold pours out  
Draining her body of that milk and honey, for all her children  
Destined to starve and wither, no more to come

Mother is dead  
And we laugh and dance  
As we burn down the empty carcass that's left  
Throwing in more plastic  
Greedy flames kept ever-growing  
Breathing in deep, toxic fumes filling our lungs,  
Becoming delirious while making angels in the ashes

Mother is dead  
And we cry and lament  
As we wake up to see what's been done  
As gems turn to tears that fill our mouths with salt  
As milk turns to bile that fills our stomachs with fire  
But now it's too late, for it is a sad fact  
All mourning and weeping won't bring her back

“Cause mother, o mother is dead”

# Boom

by Laura Hennig

*CW: war, implied death*

Drying tears on dusty cheeks,  
a whining child held against a trembling chest,  
few belongings bundled together,  
what to do now, where to go?

Boom

Rails at our backs, but sleeping still,  
keeping each other warm,  
holding hands while dreaming of summer,  
is this how life's supposed to be?

Boom

Reading the paper, there is nothing new,  
just darkness and coldness, death everywhere,  
sitting back down, a tedious task,  
such a long life and this is the end?

Boom

Jackets hanging like at home,  
there're suitcases all around,  
an involuntary journey,  
can we somehow make this good?

Boom

Music playing, someone's singing,  
children dancing, bouncing gleefully,  
couples hugging, young and old,  
what else is there to do?

Boom

Bombs falling, debris flying,  
so many people lost.  
But underground, where people live,  
hope is still alive.



The poem was inspired by following image, capturing people seeking shelter in the London Underground during the German air attacks, referred to as the Blitz:



© New Times Paris Bureau Collection/USIA/NARA  
Retrieved from Encyclopædia Britannica ([britannica.com/event/the-Blitz](http://britannica.com/event/the-Blitz))

# After you're gone

by Liana

*CW: death, loss of a loved one*

I'm afraid of the day you die  
I think I'm not ready to say goodbye  
*I don't know how to go on*  
*After you're gone*

I'm afraid every time we meet  
It will be our last memory I keep  
*I don't know how to go on*  
*After you're gone*

I'm afraid of not knowing the last thing you said  
So I try to remember all your words instead  
*I don't know how to go on*  
*After you're gone*

A world without you scares me to death  
But I'll still hold your hand when you take your last breath  
*I don't know how to go on*  
*After you're gone*

I know it will happen soon  
You once told me we'll meet again behind the moon  
*And your love will go on*  
*After you're gone*



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## Twenty-five

by Liana

*CW: drug addiction/abuse, death, grief, loss of a loved one*

Twenty-five is no age to die,  
But still, you never woke up that night.  
I still don't know what took your breath,  
Ecstasy, Cocaine, or your stupid ass Meth.

The message was a bullet,  
Yet I'm not able to pull it  
Out of my heart, where it hit me,  
Making me feel like drowning in the sea.

I'm sorry I couldn't be there.  
If I could turn back time, I swear,  
I would hold you all night long,  
Praying for your pain to be gone.

And sometimes, I think  
I don't remember what you looked like.  
I can no longer smell you, feel you,  
I'm slowly losing my mind.  
I will forget how you sounded,  
But I promise, one day, I'll stop crying.

From time to time I feel angry,  
About the pain you made us carry.  
Was it our fault?  
Was there anything we could've done – so you don't get lost?

You know, you not only killed you,  
You killed us too.  
Me, your sister, and your best friend too.  
You can't imagine what we had to go through.

And your Mama?  
I guess you would say her pain was karma.  
You used to say she had the devil's eyes,  
But I never saw a devil who cries and cries and cries.

And sometimes, I think  
I don't remember what you looked like.  
I can no longer smell you, feel you,  
I'm slowly losing my mind.  
I will forget how you sounded,  
But I promise, one day, I'll stop crying.

God knows how much I miss you,  
And I wish that I could undo,  
Everything that happened,  
To save you from this end.

But you never wanted to be clean,  
I know you weren't since thirteen.  
I guess you just never believed it, but you know what?  
You are so infinitely loved.

I remember how you always said:  
"You should live your life without regret,  
I'll die young or I'll live forever."  
Both were right, however – you live on in our hearts forever.

# Enjoy The Little Things

by Vanessa Gugenheimer

*CW: death*

People always talk about how your teenage years are the most vital years of your life. They either tell you to enjoy your youth, have fun, rebel, and make mistakes, or to have discipline, focus on your education, and don't lose your way. People know how shitty it is to be a teenager. There are a shit ton of movies that prove it. Still, they try to romanticize it. I get that at some point you're going to grow up and it's all going to be over and it all won't seem to be that important anymore. Like adults always try to tell you: "You will focus on other things." In the worst case, you'll finally live a boring ass life, with a boring ass nine-to-five job and go home to your boring ass family. So yeah, being 17 is really the best thing you can imagine. They are right about one thing though. How important your friends are at this age.

You know how they tell you that friends are like a second home you could come to? That's what they were to me. I wasn't fortunate enough to be born into a loving and welcoming home. My parents didn't care enough. For once, they often forgot my birthday. My little brother is apparently more interesting than me. I'm convinced that I was just born out of a mistake and my brother was actually wanted. I was the prototype and he was the final and perfect result. My friends were the family I never had. They were my brothers because calling them just good friends is simply not enough.

Chris was the one that sort of adopted most of us. He was the one we could lean on the most. Even though we were almost all the same age, at times it felt like he was the oldest. I sometimes had the feeling he felt somewhat responsible for all of us. Maybe because he sort of had to raise himself and his little brother all by himself. He and Sam lost both their parents and lived with their grandma since they were seven and five. She's got old and isn't the nicest granny on earth. Chris and Sam couldn't be more opposite from each other though. One had brown curly hair and was always broody, the other one was blonde with straight hair and you never caught him not smiling. I swear not one of us ever saw Sam in a bad mood. Some people might have been bothered by this 24/7 sunshine behaviour, but no one could ever be annoyed or angry with him. It was physically impossible.

Sam brought his best friend Nate into the group. He was a shy kid and didn't speak a lot. I always thought he was like a wild animal that you very slowly had to approach so that it wouldn't flee or attack you and earn its trust to be able to pet it. Or maybe even an abused animal that lost all trust in humanity. I once noticed some bruises on Nate's arms and asked Chris about it. He didn't want to tell me about it, because it wasn't his place to tell, but I made up my mind. He's still cautious around us and only fully trusts Sam, but he is way more talkative than before. I sometimes asked myself how Sam befriended Nate so easily, but then again it's Sam. I'm convinced it's a superpower of his.

Then there's Asher. I don't even know how to describe him. He was simply Asher for me. He was the new kid. He moved here in the 10th grade. No one really liked him at first. He was annoyed with everyone and everything and was always alone. Still, he caught my attention. We had English together and while everyone merely looked up a summary of the books we were talking about, he already had read every single one of them.

In math, teachers picked him when no one else said anything because they knew he knew the answer to every equation there was. I found him interesting. My interest grew even more when he sat opposite me once at lunch. Chris wasn't at school on that day, because his grandma had a medical appointment and she always insisted on him to accompany her. Sam and Nate were on a school trip. They were the only people I really hung out with at school, so I sat alone at lunch for the first time since Chris randomly decided to talk to me and be my friend in the first year of high school. It felt uncomfortable and weird. I decided it would be better to pretend like I was occupied with something than sit and eat alone. I took the book we were currently reading in class.

Something about a boy who lost his best friend, and is processing it by writing diary entries. I don't think I have ever read something more boring. I gave up on reading and stared at the words in front of me. At some point, someone pushed my menu tray further towards me. I looked up from the book and saw Asher. I don't think I ever saw him sit with someone else. I stared at him, like I stared at the words before, but this time I grew interested. He didn't look up and forked up his noodles "Put that book down. It's painful to watch you pretend to read." I put the book down.

“You’re Asher right?” He’s been here for two months now and I had two classes with him. I knew his name and he knew that too. My dumb ass couldn’t think of anything better to say.

“Yep, and you’re Jasper.” He pointed with his finger towards me, as to remind me of my own name. After that, we sat there in silence, eating our lunch. I am not a very talkative person and it feels awkward after a while when both parties don’t say anything, I always feel embarrassed. Nevertheless, this felt kind of almost normal and excited me, which also made me confused. Asher and I went to class together after lunch and after school sat beside each other on the bus. From that day on, he was kind of always there. Sam and Nate liked to tease him all the time, I knew it bothered Asher but he never said a word. He and Chris always talked about sports. Turns out they liked the same sports teams. I was glad Chris finally had someone to talk about that kind of stuff. Sport doesn’t really interest me and frankly, I’m shit at it too.

Asher and I didn’t have the same interests, but strangely enough, we were always willing to learn more about each other and I didn’t even pretend to dislike it. Whatever he was talking about, even books, I didn’t want him to shut up. He was also always willing to listen to whatever song I liked at the moment, or even read the manga I recommended to him. To other people, he might’ve come across as cold and emotionless but I knew that he cared. He cared deeper than all of us. He never missed an opportunity to ask if I had a new drawing, help Sam with his homework, or bring Nate a cold pack without saying a word. I saw his anger whenever he saw another bruise on him, but he never said something. I felt proud to be the only one to notice his change of emotions. Asher never said thank you or please. For him, every deed was self-evident. Whenever he was nervous, he started to scratch his nose. I memorized all the little things about him. How he never broke the back. How he always drew that weird intertwined rose, whenever he was bored and had a pen in his hand. Most importantly, how his eyes always searched for mine first, whenever he came into the room, or the bus, or class and instantly came towards me and only after that, greeted the others. Asher and I weren’t just best friends or brothers, we were kind of more than that. It confused me at times because I couldn’t really pin down what we were.



Looking back now, I think we shared a deeper connection or understanding of each other. We knew what we were thinking or feeling without even saying a word. And once we started talking to each other, we couldn't stop. We never mentioned it and although the others noticed that we were also physically more affectionate towards each other, they either didn't care or didn't want to talk about it. It seemed like Asher found every little chance to touch me. Either by brushing my hand with his fingers or putting his hand down on my thigh for a split second when he sat down. I didn't care, I did the same thing.

Asher was also the one with the healthiest relationship with his parents. They weren't dead, they didn't abuse him and they cared. I met them once in 10th grade when our school was cancelled due to a heavy snowstorm in January. Chris, Sam and Nate lived all a little further away. So the only one I could think of was Asher. I texted him if he wanted to come over. He didn't, but he offered me to come over to them. He said they were just starting to prepare dinner and he invited me. I considered declining but eventually said yes. They only lived 10 minutes by foot from us. Their house was an ordinary two-floor brick house. The snow covered most of the property.

I got a bit nervous when I rang the doorbell. Therefore, I was more than glad when Asher opened the door and not his parents. He had his glasses on, which he rarely did. I liked him with glasses. He was wearing a plain violet hoodie and black joggers. His black hair was messy and went in every direction. I decided back then, that this was my favourite Asher.

"Come in," he said and stepped to the side.

I knocked the snow off my shoes and jacket before I entered. After putting my outside clothes off, he guided me to the kitchen.

"Hope you're hungry, my parents decided to cook everything they found in the kitchen."

He wasn't lying. The whole table was covered in different kinds of meals. His parents had their backs turned to us and didn't notice us at first.

"Mom, Dad, Jasper's here," Asher told them and they immediately turned to us.

“Ah, hello Jasper!” his mom said and came with wide arms towards me. I didn’t get the chance to greet her back, she instantly pulled me into a hug.

“I’m Maria,” she said while hugging me. Only when she let go of me, I was able to introduce myself.

His dad shook hands with me, while brightly smiling.

“I’m Steven,” he said.

“Jasper,” I replied.

Not once was it silent at the table. They talked about the most random things. Asked me questions about my interests, my education, or about Asher. It was an unfamiliar setting for me. At home, my father was very strict on the “no talking, while eating” rule. I don’t think I have ever felt this welcomed, not even at my own home.

After dinner, I offered to clean the dishes, but his mom just smiled and pushed us out of the kitchen. His room was on the second floor, just like mine. It also had the same size. But it was way tidier. No clothes were lying around, school stuff or empty bottles.

“You wanna play something?” he asked.

“Sure.” I was unsure where to sit. It almost all seemed too clean and I didn’t want to mess anything up.

“Sit down.” He pointed towards his bed.

While sitting down, I almost jumped up high when the black ball of fur, which I mistook for a stuffed animal, started to move and stretch itself.

“Oh shit, sorry! Hope you’re not allergic to cats or scared of them.”

He took the cat into his arms.

“No, I just didn’t realise it was alive.” He smiled at that. “What is his or her name?”

He sat beside me.

“Don’t laugh though.” He side-eyed me.

“It’s a she and her name is Fjodor.”

“Sorry, what?” I asked, confused.

“Fjodor, like the author,” he explained.

“The one who wrote *The Idiot*?” I asked. He once told me about that book.

He nodded.

“You named your female cat after a Russian male author?” I asked again.

“Names don’t actually have genders, society made them have genders,” he explained.

“But yep, that’s who I named her after.”

“Of course you did.” I couldn’t help but smile.

We didn’t end up playing games, instead, we watched a movie.

Even though I suggested the movie, I was the first to fall asleep. I couldn’t keep my eyes open so I just gave in at some point. After about an hour I woke up and my eyes met those of Asher.

I didn’t understand at first but then realised that my head was resting on his shoulder and he was watching me. He looked curious like he was watching something he never saw before. I somehow was reluctant to move, and I had the feeling he didn’t want me to move either. I never experienced something like that with Chris, Sam, or Nate. This wasn’t normal for most 15-year-old boys, was it? But I concluded that it didn’t bother me, because me resting on his shoulder was the happiest I was.

They were all important to me, but Asher was a little different from the rest. I couldn’t describe the feeling back then. I still can’t describe it now. Funny how, even though I said I didn’t know how to describe him, I found a damn lot of words to do that.

However, each one of them made life at this age a little less miserable. Until that one day. Asher once said to me “Living isn’t supposed to be easy. It wouldn’t be as much fun if it wouldn’t be that hard and wouldn’t come with challenges. Try to enjoy it as long as you can, even if you suffer. You’re going to feel way better if something good happens.”

I hate him for saying that. At first, I felt like I couldn’t smile anymore, there was this big hole in me that someone forcefully ripped out and it hurt so bad and then it stopped. It became a part of me and I didn’t feel anything at all. I can’t tell which one was worse.

It was a Friday in our last high school year. There wasn’t anything unordinary about that day. It was like all the other ones. We spent another evening at Chris’, playing video games, making fun of each other and enjoying ourselves. It got late and Asher drove me home, like he always did. Normally, Nate came along, but he stayed over at Chris’ and Sam’s. Asher dropped me off and I went to sleep. I always had my phone on silent mode. All these random messages and emails bothered me at night, especially whenever Sam and Nate started a sticker war in our group chat. My little brother Eli woke me up at night. At first, I didn’t understand him, I was deep asleep and felt disoriented.

“What is it?” I asked him, still half-asleep.

“You gotta call Chris back!” His request sounded urgent. Something immediately felt wrong.

All of a sudden I was wide awake. I furrowed my eyebrows and took my phone.

I had a million messages from each of my friends and thousands of missed calls. I felt sick and my heart began to race. Something happened.

I called Chris back. It only took one beep and he picked up.

“Hello, Jasper?” I could immediately tell that he tried with all his might to keep it together.

“Yes? What is it?” I wasn’t that strong. My voice began to shake. Something horrible must have happened.

“Is Eli with you?” Why was he asking that stupid question? I almost screamed at him to finally tell me.

“Yes,” I answered. I could hear him take a deep shaky breath.

“He got into an accident. He...” He swallowed hard. “He died an hour ago, Jasper.” That’s when he broke and began to sob. I stared into the distance, still holding onto that phone. I knew who he was talking about.

“Asher,” he still said. Just his name and that was enough for me.

The phone slipped out of my hand and landed with a loud crack on the floor. I held onto the bedsheet with both hands instead and tried to breathe. But I couldn’t. I couldn’t breathe anymore. My heart had never beaten faster. I grabbed my chest. Everything seemed to blur in front of me. Am I dying right now?

Eli woke up my parents who couldn’t calm me down and I found myself in the hospital later that night. It was the first panic attack I had ever had, but it wouldn’t be the last one.

#

It's been four years now. Today would've been his 21st birthday. Chris, Sam, Nate, and I are all gathered around his grave. We didn't bring flowers. He would've hated it. Chris brought a baseball hat he had signed for Asher. Sam brought a special edition of Asher's favourite book, *The Idiot* by Dostoevsky. Nate brought a bottle of whiskey. We are sitting around, drinking half the whiskey and reminiscing about the old days. We are laughing, we are crying and above all we are missing him. After a while, they all went home. I told Chris I wanted to stay a bit longer. I wanted to give Asher my gift alone. It is a drawing I did of a picture Sam randomly took of us both. It shows me laughing about something I can't remember and next to me is Asher. He is looking at me with a slight smile. It's my favourite picture of us. I framed the drawing so it wouldn't be blown away that easily. I slowly put it down next to his tombstone.

“Hope you like it. I spent two days on this drawing. Even put off a dinner with my parents.”

I smiled, knowing exactly what he would've said. “You can't put something off that you wouldn't have gone to anyway.”

“You know, I hated you for leaving us. Leaving me. But after a while, I remembered what you once told me about enjoying even the smallest things as long as we're alive. Because living is the only thing we got.” I wiped a tear away with my palm. “I'm trying that. Shit, I'm trying every day, but it's sometimes just so hard.” I let out a short sob but recollected myself quickly.

“Okay, listen, I decided to live to the fullest. Because I decided to live for myself but also for you. So you better enjoy every single little thing I do for us.”

# You

by Sinem K.

I look at you from afar,  
In a crowded room;  
Lots of people and nobody can know,  
How my heart skips a beat when it's you.

I look down when our eyes meet,  
Feel that you're still looking,  
Feel your energy, feel your colors;  
Amber red, emerald green,  
Images of an autumn forest,  
The sound of rustling maple leaves,  
The scent of petrichor. Nature, lions, wilderness.  
I love when this happens.

But have you ever felt them too?  
Those feelings that are too big to fit into words,  
Get too heavy on your chest;  
Are so beautiful that it aches.

All of me is so full of you,  
My mind, my heart, my dreams, all my delusions;  
I can hardly call them mine.

Oh, how beautiful this sounds in a poem,  
When in reality, it feels like a scream of sorrow that never came out.  
When in reality, it feels like grief;  
And grief never once was beautiful.

## **in memoriam**

by Merle Brinkmann

When I told you I'd leave this place

One day - I truly meant it.

I had my dreams to get away

And change my name to something

That doesn't mean so much to you.

I saw myself as someone else

Someone you've never known ;

So much in me tried to escape

Somewhere - someplace alone.

When I told you I'd leave this place

You already knew - it was a lie.

Since every time I thought of it

I shoved us deep inside a ditch

And built a wooden house on top.

I prayed - to every god for mercy

Before I burned it to the ground ;

So all that ever could be found

Would be a pile of ash - and bones.

When I told you I'd leave this place

I let go - of all my doubt.

I framed myself an arsonist

And let the flames swallow my gut.

I stood there still for a long time

To witness - our slow demise ;

I hid the matchbox in the dust

And placed a little note inside

*- In memoriam of us.*



## Second Thoughts

by Anna-Lena Aerdker

Bittersweet sarcasm  
pours from your Adam's apple.  
Bittersweet irony  
reflects from my gritted teeth.  
Oh, how well we played our part!

You said I'm vanity's condescending mother.  
But oh darling, don't bother.  
You need a whole basement  
to store all of your false statements.  
Oh, that's how we grew apart!

You used to look like James Dean  
but your eyes are a little bit more green.  
Now you buried your leather jacket  
along with your dreams.  
You're not well-traveled  
and you cheer for your boss's sports team.  
Oh, what a start!

I'm standing in front of a window, full of regret.  
You look at me, pretending to be utterly upset.  
Doubts creeping in my head  
and I realized, I don't love you anymore, instead  
I've just had a change of heart.

(inspired by The 1975 – Change of Heart; last line is directly quoted)

## ***unisono, unisolo***

by Melina Marcia

We are supposed to live in a society,  
a community, and yet it seems,  
like many are fighting on their own.  
I wonder if that is by choice,  
or if no one knows who to include in their story.  
Is this how the timeline unfolds naturally,  
or was it a free decision that created this path?  
On some days I want to be a mother,  
surrounded by my own love,  
and on others the thought of children,  
and commitment makes me sick.  
I want to stay at home and be a housewife,  
and in two hours I feel sorry for everyone,  
that lives this nightmare.  
I want to tell someone about my worries of the day,  
and at the same time, I'm relieved,  
when there is nobody that could listen.  
I want to be held by you in my sleep,  
but your warmth is suffocating me and draining my energy,  
that I try to recharge so desperately.  
Five minutes ago, I could picture our life,  
planned to the most trivial detail,  
now I don't even know,  
how to write the first letter of my story.  
Today I am longing for peace and silence,  
enjoying my own mind and company,  
tomorrow, silence screams at me,  
and tells me I'm not strong enough on my own.  
I am in a constant battle of finding balance,  
between self-determination,  
and the need for social connection.  
Perhaps, it is this duality,  
that constitutes the beauty and challenge of life.  
When one is enough by oneself,  
and yet finds joy in the tapestry of shared experiences.  
Because if no one is waiting for you at home,  
is that freedom or loneliness?



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©Michelle Piwek

# Letter to My Dearest

by Vanessa Gugenheimer

My Dearest,

How long has it been now, since we last heard from each other? Has it been weeks, months, or even years? All I know is that it's been an eternity for me. How are you doing my, Dearest? How has life treated you? I hope it treated you with the utmost care and light. I pray every day, hoping you are somewhere out there, being happy and free. I remember all the dreams you had. How I wished back then, they would come true. A life without concerns. Just you on your own in the big city. I trust fate brought you to exactly the place you wished for.

Nevertheless, I miss you my Dearest.

It's been a little difficult since you left. The grey cloud started to reappear in my mind. I am scared it will get bigger and darker. I'm trying to keep it at bay. Although I am lying awake till 5 am, afraid to go to sleep and be alone with my mind. I tried to hold on to you so tight, but you just slipped away once more. But don't worry about me, I will manage, I always do. You know how much I love the rain. I am just waiting for these clouds to clear. However much I am scared, it's a comfortable feeling, a familiar one. Like an old friend, that came for a visit and decided to stay a little longer than usual.

Nevertheless, I am so happy for you, my Dearest.

I will always wait for your return. It doesn't matter how long you take.

Remember how we talked about the future? How fun it would be to grow up? We always wanted to grow up so fast. All the clothes we wanted to wear, all the people we wanted to love, all the things we wanted to do. Who would have thought that we'd wear oversized hoodies instead of tiny t-shirts, love even more people than we wanted, but never try all the things we said we would? Turns out that being a grown-up is not as easy and fun as it always sounded.

Nevertheless, I'm making the best out of it, my Dearest.

I am looking forward to being with you again. I am hopeful that it will happen. I understand it was too much for you to hear all these voices, not being able to help. I know it was hard. I will keep going on and trying to fight all these wars on my own. For you, my Dearest.

Please never forget me. From time to time, I need your strength and the laughter and silent sleep you brought with you. Till then, savour every tiny piece of peaceful life you can win.

When we see each other, you can share this life with me and we'll be carefree and enjoy the freedom.

Nevertheless, I love you, my Dearest.

I always have and always will. No matter how much others doubted and hurt you. Forgive me for hurting you too, I am truly sorry. There is no excuse. Just sometimes I don't see any sense in everything and I take it out on you. Ignore the ignorance I show at times. I am thankful for you and all the things you did for us.

Sincerely,

Your Other Half.

# Portrait of Someone, Untitled, Unknown

by Liliana Mendes Schneebeli

Green dashes of colour in a black-dyed slough,  
Reined in by tenacious arches,  
Divided by a delicate ridge.

Unfathomable depths of a dried-up source,  
An imposed quietness, still  
Surmounted by the willing.

No wooden frame, but her dark dishevelled hair,  
No oil nor umber on poplar wood,  
No welcoming embrace by the Hours of Spring -  
Discarded in the gallery of our ineffable plagues.

Winged by the contour of the New State's demise,  
Brush struck carnation; clove pink dew  
Dripping on smote and polished blue tile.

Adorned by the groan of Marianne, liberation manqué,  
Praying hands disavow, unfasten the grasp -  
Sole stem, flowerless, remains.

Swathed in blows of conditions, a Kiefer's impasto,  
Cut by a blunt black stroke,  
Reflection of a life.

No cultist mystification, but a wry, jaded smirk,  
No pale flesh tone strapped in a black satin sea -  
Devoured by adversity and by falsity erased.

Purple musing, unflinching willingness to be,  
Apoplectic kiss of righteousness,  
Unnamed, the bearer, unseen.

Olive coated scenery, everlasting glaze,  
Pain that's freshly covered -  
Tutelar layers of paint.

No entry, canonical voices chant, memento denied -  
Death by staggering blurredness, disillusion by lies.

Born in the farthest corner, blossom of the mire,  
Conjured ally to Revelation,  
Daughter of the Night.

Piercing green eyes, adjacent, so many in a row,  
Colour fan of simultaneity,  
Unfinished œuvre of heart.

Green dashes of colour in a black-dyed slough,  
Reined in by tenacious arches,  
Divided by a delicate ridge.



© Liliana Mendes Schneebeli

**Portrait of Someone,  
Untitled,  
Unknown.**

# Today, Tomorrow

by Lina Marie Schleif

Emma, 8 years old

Something is different today. I can feel it immediately as I hop across the muddy forest floor holding my mother's hand trying to get the drops of rainwater in the large puddle to splash up to my knees. In the distance, I can already make out the windswept waves of the sea, blending almost seamlessly with the cloudy horizon on a gray day like this.

I love this weather. Autumn has been my absolute favorite season for as long as I can remember because I love the sound the wind makes when it sweeps around our little wooden house. And because I think it's funny when the tiny ferry is tossed around by the waves like a toy during the 30-minute crossing to the mainland.

Although the first ship of today won't be leaving for another half hour, the lights are already on in the little house, which can only be described as a harbor building with a lot of goodwill. I immediately tug on my mother's hand a little more. When the light is on, it means that Fred, the harbor master with the striped fisherman's shirt and the big smile, is already there. And where Fred is, his little dog Pepper is not far away.

"Can I say hello to Fred and Pepper?" I ask my mother and look up at her with my big brown eyes, knowing full well that she won't be able to say no. It works this time too.

"Only if you scratch Pepper's ears for me," she grins mischievously and lets go of my hand.

Smiling, she watches as I sprint the last few meters to the harbor house and climb onto the small wooden stepladder that Fred has put there specifically for me.

"Hello Fred, hello Pepper, how...?", I fall silent as I look through the open Plexiglas window into the small wooden hut and realize that the two of them are not alone. Fred is deep in conversation with a man I've never seen here before, which is quite a sensation on an island with only around 40 inhabitants.



And on the worn leather armchair in the corner sits a boy with a book in his hand, dangling his legs. Pepper is curled up on his lap and occasionally nudges him with his tiny snout when he stops to scratch his head. The boy sits completely lost in thought, too absorbed in his story to notice the world around him. A strand of ginger hair hangs in his face in such a way that it must be tickling his nose, but he makes no effort to brush it back.

Unlike him, Fred has noticed me by now and interrupts his conversation. With his typical warm smile, he tugs lovingly on my blonde ponytail and, as he does every morning, passes me a toffee across the counter. "There's my favorite islander of all time", he beams and turns back to the man, who is standing there looking a little lost and smiling sheepishly. "James, this is Emma, the daughter of the owners of the Bed&Breakfast. Emma, this is James, our new ferry captain. And his son, Jonah."

When his name is mentioned, the boy looks up from his book and peers around in confusion, as if he's just woken up from a dream and needs to find his way back into the real world. I notice that he has countless freckles on his nose and that his eyes are almost as big and dark brown as my own. When our eyes meet, he finally brushes the stray strand of red hair from his forehead. And then he smiles so broadly that it makes his freckles dance.

6 years later

Jonah, 14 years old

"Why exactly am I doing this to myself again?" My annoyed sigh is mostly just an act, because I could never really be angry when it comes to Emma. Especially not when she's smiling at me from the side as enthusiastically as she is right now. I allow myself a glance at her pretty face, which is softened by make-up for the first time since I've known her. She has highlighted her stunning dark eyes with golden eye shadow and the dark red color on her lips makes it hard for me to think about anything else. Except, of course, the short black dress she's wearing. I think about that far too often and these thoughts do things to me that I shouldn't analyze in detail.

"Because you don't want to end up a lonely old nerd with fifteen cats who lies dead in his house for two weeks, undiscovered, because he lives like a hermit," Emma answers my question, grinning sweetly to take the edge off her words. I nod as seriously as I can.

"Right, that was it. Thank you for reminding me."

"Oh come on, pretend you're not an 82-year-old in a teenager's body and just have fun. We live in the place that Google shows you when you type 'back of beyond' into the search bar. So, now that there's finally something going on here and there's a party on the beach, let's take advantage of it. We're young..."

"...crazy and free, yeah yeah," I repeat her last words, because I've been listening to this little prep talk with the exact same wording about four times a day for the past few weeks.

Ever since our classmate Annie invited us to her birthday party on the beach, there's been no other topic for Emma. To be honest, I don't quite understand how this party is any different from a school reunion, because there are exactly six teenagers living on this island, all in the same class at the tiny island school. But since Emma ignored me for four days for that comment, I've kept my mouth shut. Even though I'd much rather have spent the evening alone with her and a bad horror movie.

That's how it always works with the two of us. I'm the calming influence that brings Emma back down to earth when she's threatening to blow up with all her ideas. And she makes sure that I don't get completely lonely among all my books and DVDs. My father sometimes says that he can't believe that two people who are so different can get on so well, but Emma and I have been proving him wrong every day for over six years.

"Look," my best friend squeaks into my ear at this moment and hops next to me with excitement. In front of us, the Hansons' private stretch of beach shines like its own little island. Fairy lights, balloons, and lanterns are hanging everywhere and a bonfire is crackling in a fire bowl behind a long wooden table full of snacks and drinks.

"Our very first party," Emma cheers and automatically reaches for my hand. As our fingers close around each other, my heart skips at least three beats, only to gallop around in my chest at double speed. I swallow several times, but the dry feeling in my throat remains.

What's wrong with me? It's impossible to count how many times Emma and I have touched each other. We even played together in the pool when we were children. But for a few months now, without warning, it suddenly feels different to be with her. Somehow more exciting and tingly and not quite as carefree as before.

Over the next few hours, I try to drown these confusing thoughts in liters of Coke, while the others giggle excitedly and sip on beer mixes that Annie's parents definitely didn't get for the party. At first, Mika tried to provoke me into joining in the drinking, but since Emma told him off and then smiled at me encouragingly, I've been left in peace.

While the girls dance on the beach pretending to be incredibly drunk and the other boys play soccer, I sit alone by the campfire and try to keep my eyes from wandering back to

Emma. At first, it was fun to watch her dance because she smiled so widely and I like her smile so freaking much. But at some point, she and her friends switched to rubbing against each other in a playfully provocative way and that was the moment when my head turned into an overripe tomato and my body into a buzzing beehive.

"Hey," I'm so absorbed in the utterly mesmerizing sight of my Coke cup that I wince in shock when Emma touches me on the shoulder. Her face is red from dancing and the beer and a few sweaty strands of hair have come loose from her ponytail. I don't know where this urge comes from, but suddenly I want to take these strands between my fingers and carefully stroke them back behind her ear. To be on the safe side, I sit down on my hands and force a smile onto my face. "Not in the mood to dance anymore?"

Emma drops onto the bench next to me and steals the Coke cup from my hand to take a sip. "Yes, I am, but not without you. You're so far away up here and I miss you." That's a side of her that even I, as her best friend, don't often get to see. This quiet, gentle Emma who steals a piece of my heart every time I meet her. Because I like this side of her at least as much as the loud, wild one.

"Hey, you bores! Come on down, we're playing a game," Annie shouts up to us from the beach, making wild gestures with both hands. An enthusiastic grin spreads across Emma's face and she claps her hands.

"You've heard it. Let's go." When I make no move to get up, she looks at me from the side with her irresistible puppy dog eyes. "It's either the game or dancing," she says with a twinkle in her eye that would make even the heartless faint. I let out an agonized groan.

"It's like you're giving me the choice between being shot or strangled." Nevertheless, I stand up and pull Emma by the hand behind me. "Just one round. ONE," I grumble, even though I know that I would do anything she asked. Even if it was 100 rounds of some stupid party game.

On the beach, we drop into a circle in the damp sand and Annie unnecessarily explains the rules of Truth or Dare. After half an hour of ludicrous tasks, not particularly shocking truths (gossip spreads almost as quickly as the flu on such a small island), and exaggerated giggling, it's my turn. I think about it for a moment, but then decide it's Dare because I'm a terrible liar and I'm too scared that someone might have noticed how my eyes are drawn to Emma over and over again.

Everyone hoots and claps because hardly anyone has chosen Dare yet. Mika, who has to think of a task for me, tilts his head thoughtfully then, a devilish grin appears on his face.

"Kiss Emma," he says and again everyone else completely freaks out while my heart tightens in my chest. I stare at Mika, completely dumbfounded, and from the way he raises his eyebrow patronizingly, I can tell that he knows. That he has seen my glances and interpreted them correctly. Maybe this idiot even thinks he's doing me a favor.

"Kiss, kiss, kiss!" the others chant, while I'm about to have a panic attack. If I kiss Emma here and now, then she'll know too. Then everyone will know. And after that, our friendship will never be as perfect as it is right now. Because she will be forced to make it clear to me in her gentle but firm way that she doesn't like me like this, because best friends don't like each other like this.

I break out in a cold sweat and rub my sticky palms over my jeans again and again. "No!" I suddenly blurt out, and it sounds much louder and harsher than in my head. The others fall silent. Suddenly it's dead quiet on the beach, only the steady sound of the waves and the crackling of the campfire reassure me that time hasn't stopped completely.

Mika is the first to break free from the general torpor. "Ohhh," says this dumbass, slapping his mates on the shoulders. "Emma's just been dumped." The other boys join in with his laughter, while the girls form a protective wall around Emma.

Slowly but surely, I realize what I've done. I've exposed Emma in front of everyone just to save my own ass. What kind of best friend does that? Mika may be a douchebag, but he's definitely not the biggest asshole of the night. Because that title goes to me.

4 years later

Emma, 18 years old

I never realized how much stuff you can fit into a 14-square-meter room. At least until this very moment, when I'm trying to fit everything into two large suitcases. "I think you need to put your feet on there too," I instruct Annie, who has been sitting on one of them for over a quarter of an hour, painting her fingernails dark red. Without interrupting her work, she complies with my request and the two halves of the suitcase finally touch, so that I quickly pull the groaning zipper shut. We repeat the same procedure with the second piece of luggage, then, I look around, sweaty and breathless, at the lifeless shell that was once my colorful room.

"I can't believe you won't be here from tomorrow on," Annie waves her hands through the air to dry her nails. There's a suspicious gleam in her eyes, but I'm smart enough not to call her on it. I know how much this whole issue is affecting her. That I'm moving to the big city to study – and that she can't go with me because she'll be taking over the island bakery from her parents in less than two years.

Annie slumps onto my bed with a deep sigh. "Call me every night, I need to know EVERYTHING, especially about the fancy restaurants and all the clothing stores. And of course about the masses of cute guys. Well..." She gives me a knowing look and although I roll my eyes in annoyance, she doesn't drop the subject. "It's so unfair. I'm still stuck with the same three immature guys and you'll soon have an unlimited choice, but you only want that one boy here on the island."

For about the thousandth time, I curse the night two years ago when I confessed to her, in melancholy washed out by wine, that I've had feelings for my best friend for ages. Feelings that go miles beyond friendship and should never see the light of day. Afterward, Annie had to swear to me over her great-grandmother's top-secret cherry pie recipe that she would never say a word about what I told her that night.

"Are you going to tell him?" she asks carefully, with no mockery or irony in her voice. I snort mirthlessly.

"To get another completely humiliating rejection from him and then know forever that I've ruined our friendship? No thanks. Sometimes it's just better to let dreams stay dreams and enjoy what you have." If I say it often enough, I'll eventually believe it myself. I'm sure I will. Annie stares at me in disbelief. "I hope you're not still referring to my birthday party from over four years ago! Are you serious?"

"He hurt me," I mumble, trying not to think about the humiliation from back then.

Annie pushes herself up from the bed and pulls me into a tight hug. "I know that. But four years is a long time, perhaps even a small eternity for young people. Everything could have changed since then and you'll miss it." She strokes my hair and smiles at me encouragingly. "Come on, Emma, where's your big mouth when it really counts?"

#

How different ten centimeters can be. For example, if you're waiting for your hair to grow ten centimeters, that's a hell of a lot. But if you're ten centimeters away from a precipice, that's pretty little. And if I'm lying on my bed ten centimeters from Jonah, that's both nothing and a whole world at the same time. Because on the one hand, his closeness is far too much and on the other, I don't want any more distance between us.

While he laughs about something that happens in the movie, I think about Annie's words. What if I really am missing my last chance? What if we lose sight of each other while I live a new life over 500 kilometers away and he stays here? Then I'll never know if there might have been something between us after all.

Once again, I turn to Jonah, take a deep breath, open my mouth – and then remain silent because I simply don't have the last ounce of courage. He seems to have noticed my

movement, at least he also turns his head in my direction, smiles at me – then his eyes widen. "Spider!" he screams and jumps off the bed in one leap. "Where? Where?" I screech back, flailing my arms wildly. "Get it off!!!" I know that Jonah is at least as disgusted by the creepy-crawlies as I am, but now, that it's a matter of life and death, I couldn't care less.

With a face contorted in fear and a long arm, he keeps wiping over my shoulder while I press my hands to my face and hope that this nightmare will pass quickly. When the tapping on my shoulder finally stops, I hesitantly open my eyes and see Jonah carrying a glass on a magazine to the window and putting the spider outside. This gesture is so very him; even if he doesn't like something, he treats it carefully and with respect. Perhaps this is exactly what has caused me to stand here right now, not knowing what to do with myself and all my feelings for him.

Before I can think clearly, I cross the room in three long strides and kiss him. I kiss my best friend, my Jonah. For about two seconds. Then my terribly reasonable head kicks back in and makes me flinch like I've been electrocuted.

For a few far too long seconds, we just stare dumbly at each other. Jonah's eyes are wide with astonishment, his red curls are beautifully tousled and his mouth is slightly open.

Then he runs his index finger over his lips as if to check whether my kiss can still be felt there. "What...?" he begins in a hoarse voice, but I don't let him get a word in. Instead, I do what I do best: Being loud and way too much. With an awfully artificial laugh, I back away from him and pretend this whole situation is one big joke. "Oh my God, I'm so sorry! I think the near-death experience with the spider went a bit to my head. Otherwise, of course, I would never have kissed you. I mean, we're best friends and from tomorrow on we'll be living almost half a country away from each other. Anything else would be completely stupid." The words spill out of me uncontrollably and I just can't stop laughing in that horrible way.

Jonah looks at me for a moment, his eyebrows drawn together, and if I didn't know better, I'd almost think he was hurt. "Yeah," he finally says, interrupting my hysterical fit of laughter. "Really. Completely stupid!"

4 years later

Jonah, 22 years old

It's not the first time I've been to a big city, but after just ten minutes in the overcrowded train station, I remember why I could never live here. I miss the peace and quiet of the island, the unobstructed view of the sea, the wide meadows and the steady chugging of the old ferry where I've been working for a few years now. Emma is probably right and I really am at least 82 years old at heart.

As if she had heard my thoughts, her blonde mop of hair appears in front of me in the crowd. I allow myself to stare at her like a creep for exactly five seconds. She's changed since the last time I saw her on the island. Her hair is no longer a practical ponytail but a chin-length curly mess and the shiny boots and beige coat make her look elegant and much older than 22. Suddenly I feel like a narrow-minded country bumpkin in my worn-out sneakers.

"Finally," Emma exclaims, falling straight into my outstretched arms. She even smells different than before, more flowery, but her embrace still feels so familiar, as if I've come home a little in all the chaos of this strange city. "I have to show you everything. The university, our shared flat, my favorite restaurant. Come on, two days is far too little time anyway." She energetically pulls me by the arm behind her and I can't help but smile when I realize that inside this unknown shell she is still my Emma.

"Please take pity on my maltreated feet." After a day full of walking, sightseeing and people, people, people, I plop down on Emma's red reading chair, completely exhausted. I can't remember the last time I was as tired as I am right now. Even Emma's disappointed expression can't change that.

"But we were supposed to go out for a drink in the bar so you could finally meet my friends," she pouts, pushing her lower lip forward.

I don't know why, but suddenly I get angry. All I really wanted was to spend some time with her, but instead she's shoeing me around like a high-powered tourist and avoids being alone with me at all costs. "Can't we just stay here and watch a movie together? Like we used to", I ask her as gently as possible, even though I want to scream.

Everything has been different since that damn kiss four years ago. Nothing is easy and casual anymore and everything just has a strange aftertaste. I miss my best friend. And, even more, I miss the time when I could still convince myself that she might possibly return my feelings a little. The time before she kissed me and then jumped on my heart like a trampoline without even knowing.

"To be honest..." Emma begins, but falls silent when a key turns in the door lock and someone enters the apartment. A few seconds later, her bedroom door opens. The thought crosses my mind that I think it's pretty cheeky of her flatmates to just turn up without knocking, and then a tall guy with dark hair and a three-day beard is standing in the room, as if he belongs here. He is wearing a dark turtleneck sweater, golden metal glasses and absolutely nothing about him reminds of a narrow-minded country bumpkin.

He approaches Emma with a broad smile and presses a kiss to her forehead. A very stupid part of my brain tries to make me believe that maybe that's how it's done here in the big city. After all, the French also kiss each other as a greeting. But there's something in Emma's eyes that breaks something inside me. This apology, this pity in her gaze.



"Aren't you going to introduce us?" the guy asks, still smiling, as if he wasn't playing the lead role in my worst nightmare. Emma wakes up from her stupor and successfully pretends that nothing is wrong. As if she hadn't been hiding the most important piece of information from me for god knows how long. "Henry, this is my best friend Jonah. Jonah, this is Henry. My...boyfriend."

2 years later

Emma, 24 years old

Although I have been to the island as often as possible during my studies, coming home feels different. A warm feeling floods my chest as I book a ticket for the ferry to the island for the last time, this time with no need for a return.

No one is waiting for me at the pier because I haven't told anyone. I'm looking forward to the surprise on my parents' faces, to a "welcome home" hug from Annie, ...and to Jonah.

Nothing in particular, just everything about him.

As I roll off the ferry with my two suitcases, I feel a little lost despite all the joy. I don't know where to go first, who to greet first. It is already late evening, the harbor is only lit by a few

lanterns and there is an unpleasant drizzle in the cool air. I wrap my coat tighter around me and am about to make my way to our Bed&Breakfast when I notice that there is still a light on in the small harbor hut. As if of their own accord, my legs change course and head for the tiny point of light in front of a whole sea of darkness.

I no longer need the small wooden ladder to peer inside the building through the Plexiglas window, but the view I see still takes me back about 16 years into the past. There is no longer a worn leather armchair but a tiny sofa, but the sight of Jonah, completely absorbed in the book on his lap and with ginger strands of hair in his forehead, is so familiar that I feel warm in my stomach.

I stand there quietly for about five minutes, not wanting to disturb him or rob myself of the chance to continue looking at him. As I stand there, shivering from the cold, I realize what I've always known. It is Jonah. It is and was and always will be. He's the person I want to be stuck with on a small but beautiful island in the middle of nowhere. I don't need bars, restaurants or shopping malls – just Jonah, my little room, and our terrible horror movies.

Suddenly, all I want is to snuggle up to him and hide my face in the crook of his neck, but I don't know if that's okay. Because I broke something between us about two years ago, when suddenly it wasn't just Jonah and Emma anymore but Jonah, Henry, and Emma. Henry, who was only a part of my life for a short time because it felt wrong pretty damn quickly to be with him and yet only be able to think about someone else.

I leave my suitcases as silently as possible and sneak around the wooden hut to the door.

When it creaks softly as it swings open, Jonah looks up from his book. When his eyes meet mine, he smiles just like he did back then. With dancing freckles and full of promises.

"You're back," he says softly, rising from the small couch.

"I'm back," I whisper.

Whatever that means.

## Level of Bliss

by Liliana Mendes Schneebeli

Beneath a sheath of water lilies lies,  
enclosed by river stones and silence drenched,  
bedecked with gladioli's narrow ties,  
by soothing currents rocked, a body quenched.

The muted sounds a peaceful mind escort  
to realms of all unvoiced, unheard, and banned,  
to pathways full of I - inverted sort -,  
before then brought to their untimely end.

A cold embrace against perpetual flow,  
a firm determined grasp around the waist -  
how hushed their voices sound, from down below,  
disrupted, my desired rest, displaced.

Removed from water's shielding riverbed,  
restored the myth fallacious echoes keep,  
by ancient tongues this noxious lie was fed  
to numb and chain the mind to endless sleep.

On shore, in pain and dragged and torn and spread,  
a dreadful sigh extends towards the sky,  
a lonesome lily lifts its caring head,  
a body falls apart – bereaved of I.

## Haikus på svenska

by Nele

*Blomstrande* as spring  
All over glowing blossoms  
The smell of flowers.

*Solig* as summer  
A dip into the cold sea  
Ice cream on my shirt.

*Fuktig* as autumn  
Wet and multicolored leaves  
A hot chocolate.

*Kall* as the winter  
Snowflakes melting in my hair  
Gloves warming my hands.



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## Closing Word

Dear Reader,

you've made it!

Thank you for staying until the very last page. We hope that you enjoyed this little collection of creativity.

We - the Ink Drop team - are all students who decided that writing alone wasn't enough for us. With this journal, we wanted to create a platform at Bielefeld University for young aspiring writers and artists to share their work.

This third issue, "The (Re)Construction Issue", is the result of hard work, dedication and commitment. We want to thank all of the writers and artists for their participation and for sharing their wonderful poems, stories, and art.

We hope there's more to come, and until then:

Stay creative!

The Ink Drop Team



## Authors

**Kay Dockhorn** is 25 years old, loves creative expression, especially writing, and has been a student at Bielefeld University since 2018/2019. Her hobbies and experiences are her greatest inspiration in her writing. She started writing creatively in her free time when she was 10 years old, and has been a self-published author since 2015.

**Mika Dick** studies English and Philosophy, living in a constant state of daydreaming about new characters for pen and paper games, as well as labyrinthine plots for (short) stories even they themselves don't know how to navigate. They also work towards raising awareness for discrimination and bigotry, often using their writing to explore real-life injustices.

**Maria Christina Lavanco** is a student at Bielefeld University.

**Laura Hennig** is a student at Bielefeld University.

**Liana** is a 22-year-old student at Bielefeld University who is studying to become a primary school teacher. During her studies, she rediscovered her love and joy for creative writing and uses poetry as a kind of therapy to process thoughts and feelings. She thanks her course instructor Georgina, whose seminars helped Liana find her way back to creative writing.

**Vanessa Gugenheimer** studies English and Literature at Bielefeld University and always had a passion for books. Whenever she had to escape reality she found refuge in stories. She started writing her own stories when she was 14 years old, and till now it became a way to clear her head.

**Sinem K.** was born in the middle of December in 1998. Maybe that's why she loves sparkling lights, the smell of burning firewood and reading on cold winter days with a hot cup of coffee. She is an absolute cat person and animal-friend. Besides writing poetry, she loves to make music and to take pictures of everything that inspires her. Staying inspired is her main goal in life. As an English and Spanish student, she wants to make her passion for languages, cultures and interpersonal relations to her profession by becoming a teacher and following the footsteps of some of her own, very inspiring teachers.

**Merle Brinkmann** is a student at Bielefeld University. She has been fascinated by the complexity of language and meaning for most of her life. This inevitably led to her passion for reading and writing, preferably poetry. She finds inspiration in her closest friendships and relationships and the ever-changing look and feel of nature.

**Anna-Lena Aerdker** is a student at Bielefeld University.

**Melina Marcia** is a student at Bielefeld University, studying English and Social Sciences. Writing is one of many ways for her to express creativity and cope with real-life social issues. In the future she will most certainly make some students mad by forcing them to do a lot of creative writing tasks.

**Liliana Mendes Schneebeli** is a student at Bielefeld University.

**Lina Marie Schleif** is a student at Bielefeld University.

**Nele** is a student at Bielefeld University.